

Message Text

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21

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05 RSC-01

CIEP-02 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 COME-00

XMB-04 FRB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 PA-02 PRS-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

ABF-01 IGA-01 /086 W

----- 067654

O 171140Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3256

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

UNCLAS NOUAKCHOTT 0094

AID/W FOR AFR/CWR
PARIS FOR RFC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIN AFIN MR

SUBJECT: MAURITANIA PROHIBITS FOREIGN OPERATIONS OF BANK HOLDING
EMBASSY/AID ACCOUNTS

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 0093

1. GENERAL SITUATION CONCERNING SUSPENSION OF FOREIGN
BANKING ACTIVITIES OF BANQUE INTERNATIONALE POUR LA
MAURITANIE (BIMA) IS SET FORTH IN REFTEL. AS EMBASSY/USAID
ACCOUNTS ARE HELD BY BIMA, WHICH HAS BEEN PROHIBITED FROM
ENGAGING IN FOREIGN BANKING OPERATIONS UNTIL AT LEAST
APRIL 15, WE FACE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF "BLOCKED" FUNDS
FOR PAYING CERTAIN EXPENSES.

2. FIRST DIFFICULTY OCCURRED JANUARY 16 WHICH IS PAYDAY FOR
LOCAL EMPLOYEES. ALL EMPLOYEES WERE TOLD UPON PRESENTING CHECKS
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TO BIMA MADE OUT IN LOCAL OUGUIYA THAT BANK COULD NOT MAKE

PAYMENT AS MONEY IS DRAWN ON FOREIGN ACCOUNT. SECOND ATTEMPT ON JANUARY 17 TO CASH CHECKS RESULTED IN SAME RESPONSE. WE HAVE SUFFICIENT CASH ON HAND (APPROXIMATELY 100,000 OUGUIYA) TO PAY LOCAL EMPLOYEES FOR TIME BEING. CASHIER'S CASH ON HAND WILL, HOWEVER, LAST ONLY MATTER OF DAYS. AS RESULT OF RECENT WACASC FLIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, WE MUST PAY BILL OF APPROXIMATELY 91,000 OUGUIYA FOR AVIATION FUEL.

3. AT THIS EARLY STAGE, WE HAVE NO IDEA HOW LONG WE WILL BE DENIED ACCESS, EITHER FOR LEGAL OR BUREAUCRATIC REASONS, TO USG FUNDS AT BIMA. ON ASSUMPTION THAT DELAY WILL EXCEED PERIOD OF TIME FOR WHICH WE HAVE CASH AVAILABLE, WE REQUEST THAT RFC PARIS ADVISE US ON POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING EMBASSY ACCOUNT AT ANOTHER BANK IN NOUAKCHOTT. (FOR TIME BEING ANYWAY, BIMA IS ONLY BANK FACING SUSPENSION OF FOREIGN OPERATIONS). IN MEANTIME, EMBASSY WILL DISCUSS WITH MAURITANIAN CENTRAL BANK POSSIBILITY OF GETTING FUNDS RELEASED. EVEN IF THIS IS POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, THERE IS LIKELY TO BE LONG BUREAUCRATIC DELAY.

4. FOLLOWING BANKS, OTHER THAN BIMA, HAVE BRANCHES IN NOUAKCHOTT:

(A) BANQUE MAURITANIEENNE DE DEVELOPPEMENT ET DE COMMERCE (BMDC), B. P. 219

(B) BANQUE ARABE-AFRICAINE EN MAURITANIE (BAAM), B.P. 622, TELEX 43 (SEE NOUAKCHOTT A-60 FOR ADDITIONAL INFO) HAS CORRESPONDENT RELATIONSHIP WITH MANY AMERICAN BANKS INCLUDING BANK OF AMERICA. KEY STAFF MEMBERS SPEAK ENGLISH. MAURITANIAN CENTRAL BANK HOLDS 49 PERCENT OF BAAM.

(C) SOCIETE MAURITANIEENNE DE BANQUE (SMB), B. P. 614, TELEX 67 (HEAD OFFICE IN PARIS--SOCIETE GENERALE)

(D) BANQUE ARABE-LIBYIENNE-MAURITANIEENNE DE DEVELOPPEMENT (BALM). (WE BELIEVE BANKERS TRUST SERVES AS CORRESPONDENT BANK.)

5. OF BANKS LISTED IN PARA 4 ABOVE, WE RECOMMEND ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONSHIP WITH SMB, WHICH HAS HEAD OFFICE IN PARIS,
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OR BAAM, WHICH IS CLOSELY LINKED TO MAURITANIAN CENTRAL BANK.

6. USAID ACCOUNT WITH BIMA IS FOR GRANT AGREEMENT FUNDS FOR R/R PROGRAM. MAURITANIAN MINISTER OF HEALTH, LOCAL DROUGHT RELIEF COORDINATOR, DETERMINED IN BEGINNING THAT ACCOUNT SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED AT BIMA. SITUATION AT BIMA HAS CREATED TWO IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS FOR AID/M:
(A) IT IS UNABLE TO MAKE PAYMENTS TO SUPPLIERS OUTSIDE

OF MAURITANIA AND (B) REPLENISHMENT CHECKS FROM
WASHINGTON VIA RFC PARIS THENCE TO NOUAKCHOTT ARE ADDRESSED
TO BIMA.

7. AID/M, UNLESS AID/W PERCEIVES OBJECTION, PROPOSES
TO SEE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND ASK IF HE COULD HAVE
USAID ACCOUNT REESTABLISHED IN ANOTHER BANK. AID/M
ALSO RECOMMENDS THAT REPLENISHMENT CHECKS BE HELD
FOR TIME BEING IN WASHINGTON/PARIS.

8. PLEASE ADVISE. SHINN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BLOCKED ASSETS, BANK ACCOUNTS, BANKS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NOUAKC00094
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750018-0861
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750142/aaaabkws.tel
Line Count: 126
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 NOUAKCHOTT 0093
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 MAY 2003 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <25 Nov 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAURITANIA PROHIBITS FOREIGN OPERATIONS OF BANK HOLDING EMBASSY/AID ACCOUNTS
TAGS: EFIN, AFIN, MR, BANQUE INTERNATIONALE
To: STATE PARIS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006